



June 19-25, 2011

www.iafc.org/safetyweek

Surviving the Fire Ground

Fire Fighter, Fire Officer & Command Preparedness

2011 Fire/EMS Safety, Health & Survival Week

FAQs

The International Association of Fire Chiefs and the International Association of Fire Fighters are pleased to sponsor the 2011 Fire/EMS Safety, Health & Survival Week (Safety Week).

This year's event will be held June 19-25, scheduled to give maximum flexibility and support to all types of departments—career, combination and volunteer—and both fire and EMS personnel.

The theme this year is "Surviving the Fire Ground: Fire Fighter, Fire Officer & Command Preparedness," which encourages all fire/EMS personnel to focus on survival training and education.

With so many changes (budget cuts, staffing reductions, reduced training, etc.) in so many fire departments, it is critical for fire fighters to focus on their own survival on the fire ground. There is no other call more challenging to fire ground operations than a Mayday call — the unthinkable moment when a fire fighter's personal safety is in imminent danger. Fire fighter fatality data compiled by the United States Fire Administration have shown that fire fighters "becoming trapped and disoriented represent the largest portion of structural fire ground fatalities." The incidents in which fire fighters have lost their lives, or lived to tell about it, have a consistent theme — inadequate situational awareness put them at risk.

Fire fighters don't plan to be lost, disoriented, injured or trapped during a structure fire or emergency incident. But fires are unpredictable and volatile, and they will not always go according to plan. What a fire fighter knows about a fire before entering a blazing building may radically change within minutes once inside the structure. Smoke, low visibility, lack of oxygen, structural instability and an unpredictable fire ground can cause even the most seasoned fire fighter to be overwhelmed in an instant.

The IAFF Fire Ground Survival (FGS) program is the most comprehensive survival skills and Mayday prevention program currently available and is open to all members of the fire service. Incorporating federal regulations, proven incident management best practices and survival techniques from leaders in the field, and real case studies from experienced fire fighters, the FGS program aims to educate all fire fighters to be prepared if the unfortunate happens. The IAFF Fire Ground Survival Program will provide participating fire departments with the skills they need to improve situational awareness and prevent a Mayday. More information can be found here: <http://www.iaff.org/hs/fgs/fgsindex.htm>.

Who is doing this?

Safety Week is sponsored by:

- International Association of Fire Chiefs
- International Association of Fire Fighters

and supported by the following partners:

- Canadian Association of Fire Chiefs
- Canadian Fallen Firefighters Foundation
- Congressional Fire Services Institute

- Fire and Emergency Manufacturers and Services Association
- Fire Apparatus Manufacturers' Association
- Fire Department Safety Officers Association
- International Association of Arson Investigators
- International Association of Black Professional Fire Fighters
- International Association of Women in Fire & Emergency Services
- International Code Council
- International Society of Fire Service Instructors
- National Association of Hispanic Firefighters
- National Association of State Fire Marshals
- National Association of State Foresters
- National Fallen Firefighters Foundation
- National Fire Protection Association
- National Society of Executive Fire Officers
- National Volunteer Fire Council
- National Wildfire Coordinating Group
- NIOSH Fire Fighter Fatality Investigation and Prevention Program
- North American Fire Training Directors
- United States Fire Administration

Safety Week activities, resources and sample daily schedules are coordinated by:

- IAFC Safety, Health and Survival Section
- IAFF Division of Occupational Health, Safety and Medicine

We have a lot we do during the day. How are we supposed to do this too?

Easy—don't do your normal operations outside of responding to emergency calls. The point of Safety Week is to stop normal operations and focus on the issue of surviving on the fire ground. The focus of the day should be survival related activities, responding to emergency calls and nothing else.

Is this intended only for career fire fighters?

No, this is intended for all fire fighters and EMTs. This includes career and volunteer, airports, wildland, EMS, federal and military and industrial, to name a few.

We have four platoons. Should we do this for all 4 or just pick one day?

Repeat the Safety Week activities on each shift or duty crew. Even if your drill night is not during Safety Week, still perform the activities on your regular drill night in June. It is understood that not everyone works on any given day or has a training drill during this week; find a time for department activities and take part in a Safety Week activity or two. Use the same schedule for each platoon until everyone has taken part. You don't need to move your drill night, even if it's earlier or later than the week of June 19 – take part on a schedule that makes sense for your department. And remember the most important lesson of all – fire ground survival should not be focused on for just one day or just one week. It should be a focus every day!

But the suggested schedule is for an all-day shift, and we don't work shifts.

The suggested schedule is merely a guideline to give some ideas of activities that can be accomplished in a structure of a complete work day, but there are parts that apply to everyone. In the case of EMS, wildland and airport operations, some of the standards, requirements and equipment may be very different than the ones suggested for a structural department.

For volunteers, focus on one of the “Surviving the Fire Ground: Fire Fighter, Fire Officer & Command Preparedness” drills that would fit nicely in a two- or three-hour monthly drill. Everyone in your department should complete the online IAFF Fire Ground Survival awareness training at http://www.iaff.org/hs/fgs/FGS_CandidateGuide.htm. There are lots of ways to make the maximum impact within the scope of your normal operations.

Also don't forget the suggested schedule and topics are just that, a suggestion. There may be something that has come up in your department or a neighboring department that you feel is more important to review than one of the suggestions, and that is what you should focus on.

OK, I'm sold; now where do I find information to help plan the day?

All of the Safety Week resources are located at www.iafc.org/safetyweek. From that page you can sign up that you're taking part, obtain a recommended schedule of activities and find examples of various resources and examples from fire departments around North America. They include accident reports, near-miss reports, standard operating procedures, drills and articles for you to use as you prepare for the day's activities.